

Interview H0000: with Setrong Wangye [tib. gser grong dbang rgyal], (China, May 1993) : Part No. 6 of 7

Setrong Wangye was a member of a rich shungyupa (government taxpayer serf) family [tib. gshung rgyugs pa]) in Tülung [tib. stod lung] district. His family had large land holdings with its own miser [tib. mi ser] or bound peasants/serfs and also held the position of Gyatso gembo [tib. rgya mtsho rgan po] for the district. He discusses the Lhasa People's Association as well as an excellent discussion of the traditional system of land and taxes with respect to the aristocratic and religious estates and bound peasants/serfs (tib. miser) in the old society, including examples of law cases.

Q

I want to ask you about taxes in the old society. Before starting this, I am not clear about something I asked you about last time. You had heard something about how [Gyüme](#) [tib. rgyud smad] [Tantric College] gave the equivalent of 2,000 [khe](#) of barley to the People's Association, but you never said from where you heard that? So where did you hear that?

A

At that time, I didn't know whether the People's Association was good or bad. My late older brother used to tell me a lot that I should not meddle in that. But I had done a little bit of research on the association, so I heard about it that way. However, I don't have anything to tell you about a particular person or any proof to tell you.

Q

Can you explain how the taxes were collected in the old society when you were the official? Mainly, and first of all, how did you collect the taxes? You collected the taxes and you also had to pay taxes to Dechen district [tib. bde chen rdzong], like the horse corvée tax, right?

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A

Regarding the [Gyüme](#) Tantric College, at that time, I was in my 30s and I was kind of smart. So I had done some research about whether the People's Association was good or bad and whether they could work out something. There was something that had a reason. [Lukhangwa](#) [tib. klu khang ba] was the Acting Prime Minister, the Sitsab, and he was the Tsondzin, [tib. 'tsho 'dzin] [the guardian appointed to assist Gyüme]. Last time, I didn't remember that. The Tsondzin was like the advisor [ch. gu wen], a person to whom they could ask for advice.

For example, the Tsondzin of Drepung [Loseling](#) [tib. blo gsal gling] was the [Kalön Lama Tempa Jayang](#) [tib. bstan pa 'jam dbyangs]. They used to ask better aristocrats to become their Tsondzin. Normally, they don't ask them about the minor things, but when they have some major matter, they would seek advice from the Tsondzin. So they would not search for this person indiscriminately, they would search for a person who could give advice with regard to the present and the future, and who could see the front side as well as the back side of issues.

At that time, we all knew that the people in charge of the People's Association didn't have much economic wealth [themselves], but they spent a lot of money on giving alms to the monks at the Mönlam [tib. smon lam] Festival and they also made some offerings. I myself was wondering how they could get so much money because they didn't have that kind of economic condition themselves. Therefore, I inquired about how they got the things to spend. Then I heard from the society that [Gyüme](#) College had helped them. So I thought that the reason for that was certainly because [Lukhangwa](#) was the Tsondzin of [Gyüme](#) College and also the Sitsab. The Lama [Gyüpa](#) will definitely listen to an order from the Sitsab and I knew clearly that the Sitsab was conservative [tib. klad pa ljang gu]. So there was a reason for me to think that. It wasn't that I just trusted some rumors that I heard from the alleys.

As for the taxes, at that time, there were [miser](#) who belonged to the Tibetan Government, the aristocrats and to the religious entities [tib. gzhung sger chos gsum]. The aristocratic estates had a little bit of taxes to collect and they had their [miser](#) who they could make do the work. They had a complete thing. The aristocratic and religious estates had their land based on the unit called [dön](#) [tib. 'don]. It was equal to two [gang](#) [tib. rkang] in size, but they had to pay taxes or provide labor for only one [gang](#).

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Q

How many [khe](#) of seed was there in one [gang](#)?

A

It is not certain or fixed. When we were working in the archives [ch. dang an guan], they had inquired about that. The number of [khe](#) of seed used for one [gang](#) was not the same in all parts of Tibet. Generally speaking, it was about 60 [khe](#) of seed for a [gang](#) so one [dön](#) was 120 [khe](#) of seed.

Q

Was that the average?

A

Yes, something like that. At that time, I had one [gang](#) of land as the basis for working as the Gyatso Gembo [tib. rgya [tsho](#) rgan po] and it had about 60 [khe](#) of seed. So I think this was the average.

Q

Wasn't the land basis of the [miser](#) of the aristocratic and religious estates also called [tregang](#) [tib. khral rgang] or treten [tib. khral rten]? The government was saying that one [dön](#) is two [gang](#) and a [gang](#) had 60 [khe](#) of seed. But I think the miser's [tregang](#) was smaller than that, right?

A

It was much smaller. For example, there was an estate called Gyatö [tib. rgya stod] that belonged to Kündeling located east of my home. That estate had 7 [gang](#) and the taxes were divided between 11-12 households of [miser](#) who were just given 10-15 [khe](#) of seed for each [of their] [tregang](#). Down from us there was another estate that belonged to Kündeling called Santsam [tib. sa mtshams]. It had 8 [gang](#). So these two estates had 15 [gang](#). So Santsam Estate had about 20 some [miser](#) households and they divided the taxes to the [miser](#) and some had 1 [gang](#), or half of a [gang](#) or two thirds of [gang](#) or three fourths of a [gang](#). They said that the [miser](#) had to work for one [gang](#) for the [chitre](#) and one [gang](#) for the [nangtre](#). The [nangtre](#) involved for sending one person to do the farming for

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the estate. The [chitre](#) meant doing work for the taxes imposed by the local government. These two taxes were called the taxes in-kind and in labor or "gangdro langdon" [tib. rgang 'gro [lag](#) 'don]. Doing labor meant sending pack animals for transporting goods and people to work whenever they were called.

In the upper part of Tölung Dechen, there were 61 [gang](#) that had been working for taxes permanently. When 100 pack animals were called, each [gang](#) have to send a little less than two pack animals. At that time, when they calculated the number of loads, it was counted as fractions like one third and two thirds. 6 phul was counted as one [gang](#). 6 phul was 1 [dre](#), and 20 [dre](#) was 1 [khe](#).

It was said clearly in the fraction [tib. cha phran] that a fraction of 240 is half [tib. nyis brgya bzhi bcu'i cha la phyed]. This was a very accurate math system where even a single grain could be counted. Regarding this, I used to tell the Cultural Education Bureau [ch. wen jiao ju], "When the pebbles, broken porcelain, twigs and peach seeds were poured, people might think that it was kind of primitive thing, but it was very accurate. You should do research on that."

At that time, the [miser](#) were counting the number of [tregang](#) very precisely because they were obliged to work for the taxes [based on this]. So if there were 200 loads it was divided into 61 [gang](#), so each [gang](#) would get one load and one fourth of a load [actually 3.3 loads]. When they gathered there, it was easy to divide when it was 1 [gang](#) or a half, but it was very difficult to divide when they had fractions like one third, one fourth and one fifth. But the taxpayer [miser](#) could easily do that math because they were accustomed to it. There were very few of them who had one [tregang](#) for one household.

Normally, the aristocratic estates would give their [miser](#) different amounts of fields according to their own wishes. The government would never meddle into this matter. That's how all the taxpayer households became poor. But we, the [shungyupa](#) households were not same. We originally had nine and one third [tregang](#). We had to give one [tregang](#) to another household, so then we had eight and one third [tregang](#). There were no other households like us working taxes for eight and one third [tregang](#) [this was huge] in the whole of Dongkar [tib. gdong dkar] and Liu [tib. sne'u].

If you look at this all of a sudden, there was a great contradiction. Last time, I told you that the bigger aristocrats had over 100 don. That meant over 200 [gang](#), right? I may say that my family was big, but compared to them [the larger aristocratic estates], it wasn't big at all because I had only eight and one third [tregang](#). As I mentioned above, the

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aristocratic and religious estates [typically] divided the land and the taxes to many small households.

As I told you last time, I had 12 [miser](#) households who didn't have to work for the outer taxes or [chitre](#). They only had to do the corvée farming for us. In case we had to send them to do work for the [chitre](#) tax or with their pack animals, we would give them [tsamba](#), tea, and butter and a little bit of meat.

This was the main difference between the [miser](#) of the aristocratic estates and the [shungyupa](#). We didn't have any taxes to collect from our [miser](#). We gave them the land as the basis for working for the inner corvée [nangtre](#). They didn't need to pay any lease fee to us for this land. In addition to that, they were given some lands on a lease basis for which they had to work for the taxes. This was called "leased land for doing taxes" [tib. khral rgyab bogs zhing]. We collected one [khe](#) of lease fee from one [khe](#) of seed planted.

Q

When your [miser](#) came to work for corvée labor, did you call that gangdro?

A

It could be regarded as a gangdro, but it was called it [nangtre](#).

Q

Did they call it [nangtre](#) when the [miser](#) of Kündeling worked for the estate?

A

Yes. It was called [nangtre](#) and the taxes imposed by the local government were called [chitre](#).

Q

The [miser](#) of Kündeling had to work for both, the [nangtre](#) and [chitre](#), right?

A

Yes.

Q

What kind of [chitre](#) tax did the [miser](#) of the Kündeling have to do?

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A

At that time, there was a proverb in Tibet saying, "The taxes were like number of hairs and the wrinkles [ripples] of the water" [tib. skra'i grangs ka chu'i gnyer ma]. It means that they were countless so the [miser](#) will not know what kind of taxes they were going to impose.

At the time of the democratic reforms when the [miser](#) held the struggle sessions against the serf owners, they said that the taxes were imposed casually [tib. da ga se]. But actually they were given lands and it was made into a [tregang](#) and the taxes were imposed according to the [tregang](#). The taxes were not imposed indiscriminately or recklessly, like when someone passing by just said, "Come on! Do this and that."

Q

Nobody will do that, right?

A

Yes. They will say that I won't do that because there should be a basis [in land] for that.

Q

For example, when they originally made up the [tregang](#), if Kündeling gave their [miser](#) 10 [khe](#) of seed for one [tregang](#) would it have been possible that Surkhang would have given 20 [khe](#) of seed for one [tregang](#) to their [miser](#)?

A

This was possible because we gave 12 [khe](#) of seed only for the [nangtre](#). But they didn't have the 12 [khe](#) basis for both the [nangtre](#) and the [chitre](#). The aristocratic and religious estates were not same at all, because there wasn't any decision made by the government. They were just doing things based on their own wishes.

Q

Were there two different kinds of [miser](#) at Kündeling; some working for the [nangtre](#) and some working for the [chitre](#)?

A

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No. One family had to work for both the [nangtre](#) and the [chitre](#). For example, it was like I am saying, "I have one [gang](#) for the [nangtre](#) and one [gang](#) for the [chitre](#)."

Q

So if a person had the land, they had to work both the [nangtre](#) and the [chitre](#), right?

A

Yes.

Q

If someone had only one [gang](#) for the [nangtre](#), then they didn't need to work for the [chitre](#), right?

A

No.

If a [miser](#) of Kündeling was given 10 [khe](#) of land for one [gang](#), they had to work for one [gang](#) for the [nangtre](#) on the estate and they also had to work for one [gang](#) for the [chitre](#) imposed by the local government, right?

Yes.

Q

The difference was that your [miser](#) only had to work for the [nangtre](#) and you did the work for the [chitre](#), right?

A

Yes. Whenever a tax came down from the local government, I or my older brother would go to take care of it. It was because, on the one hand, we were the Gyatso Gembo, and on the other hand, we ourselves had to work doing a lot of taxes. Then we had to arrange how many [trenyog](#) and pack animals we should send and we had to divide the taxes.

As for the aristocratic and religious estates, the estate that belonged to Kündeling, for example, had 7 [tregang](#). They had set up a headman who would go there and bring back the information regarding the taxes and he would call all the [treba](#) taxpayers and divide the taxes. The estate steward would never go for the taxes.

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Q

If Kündeling had to pay 100 [khe](#) of barley to the government as their [chitre](#), did the estate pay that or did the [miser](#) have to pay that?

A

The money and the barley taxes were taken care of by the Kündeling Labrang. The [miser](#) couldn't handle to pay that much. They didn't have that amount to pay. At that time, it was called, "the civil and military taxes that should be paid in-kind and in labor" [tib. zhi drag rkang 'gro [lag](#) 'don]. If the estate that belonged to Kündeling was obliged to send 1-2 soldiers for the [Trapchi](#) [tib. grwa bzhi] Regiment which was also called the "The Chinese Trained Regiment" [tib. rgya sbyong dmag sgar], the Labrang took care of sending the soldiers. The [miser](#) didn't have to do anything. The Labrang had to send the people and give them food and clothing.

Q

So the [miser](#) of Kündeling just had to work for the estate and they also had to send the transportation corvée animals for the government. Otherwise, they didn't need to pay barley and stuff like skins and cow dung, right?

A

Yes. They didn't need to pay much for the taxes because they didn't have the means to pay that. At that time, there were some people who took the estate of Kündeling as a lease for a couple of years and then left it. They were just hoping to get some profit.

The aristocratic estates were also like the religious estates [like Kundeling]. For example, the aristocratic families called Ringang [tib. rin sgang], Seshim [tib. zas zhim], and Changöpa [tib. bya dngos pa] were in Tülung [tib. stod lung]. Changöpa was one of the small lords who had only about 4 [dön](#) and a few [miser](#). Changöpa had a headman who took responsibility for the taxes and divided the taxes among the [miser](#). The [miser](#) of the aristocrats also have to work for the estate just like the [miser](#) that belonged to the monasteries.

Q

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I heard that each aristocratic family had only one Shabten Phashi [tib. zhabs rten pha gzhis][the estate from which the obligation to provide an official to the government derives]--and they didn't need to pay or work for taxes for that estate, right?

A

Yes, that's right. There were "Four types of tax exemptions" [tib. chag chen bzhi]; the first was called Shabdö Ngochag. This was the tax exemption for the officials of the Tibetan Government [tib. zhabs sdod ngo chag]. If there was one lay official serving the government, they were totally exempted for paying or working for taxes for one [dön](#) of land. If the lay official got old and died and if there were no children to work as the official, then they had to pay barley and money to the local government for one [dön](#).

Q

That was kind of the substitute [tib. dod] for the tax, right?

A

Yes. For example, in Tülung, there was the Seshim Estate and below that there was an estate called Trakhug [tib. brag khug] that belonged to a monk official. Later the monk official died and the family had two daughters who were broadcast announcers. The family had a son who became a monk official. The younger ones in the family were 3-4 daughters. After the monk official died, the daughters couldn't serve as officials so the local government gave their estate to Dzasa Ngawang Gyentsen [tib. ngag dbang rgyal mtshan]. They lost the estate because there were no officials serving the government. Seshim was an aristocrat who had a famous wife [tib. lcam] in our times.

Q

There was a son of Seshim, right?

A

Yes. He was the one who was taking opium and was called Pemala. I played majong with him many times and we were very friendly. Poor thing! He didn't get a good back door relation and he was unable to become a lay official. He went through the motions of going to the Tsikhang, but he wasn't able to succeed to be a Tsitrugpa (the Official Trainee)

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[tib. rtsis phrug pa]). When they didn't have a lay official serving the government, the local government took back their estate and gave it to [Yabshi](#) Tagtser [tib. [yab](#) gzhis stag 'tsher].

Dzasa Ngawang Gyentsen, whom I just mentioned, was also called Dzasa Gyatag [rgya stag (sp.?)]. He used to be famous and had his estate that was called the Gyatag Estate near Gepo [tib. gad po]. The 13th Dalai Lama gave the Gyatag Estate to the engineer [ch. gong cheng shi] called Chenmo Karmala [tib. chen mo skar ma lags] as a bonus for building the Jensal [tib. spyang bsal] Palace in [Norbulinga](#). After the engineer died, since he had only a few daughters and didn't have a son, the local government took the estate back and gave it to Dzasa Gyatag.

Q

Some of the aristocrats had more estates in addition to their Shabten Phashi. When there were no officials serving for the government, could the government take back the other additional estates?

A

They didn't particularly mention the the Shabten Phashi. It was just generally said that the taxes for one [dön](#) were exempted because they served the government.

The smallest aristocrat was called Gerpa Takyang [tib. sger pa rta rkyang]. He had only one [dön](#) of land. The aristocrats who were a little bit better than that like Changöpa, had 4 [dön](#). From these, the taxes for one [dön](#) were exempted because they sent a family member as a government official. But at that time, it appeared that the local (Tibetan) government didn't make many changes [in ownership] for the old government official families [even when they didn't have officials serving]. But that was also not certain. However, it would take just a moment for the local Tibetan government to make changes for the small aristocrats. However, they couldn't change the big aristocratic families who had over 100 [dön](#) in estates in Lhoka, in [Tsang](#) [tib. gtsang], in [Tö](#) [tib. stod], in Phenpo, and everywhere.

Q

Were the aristocrats allowed to sell their estates?

A

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Yes, they were allowed. However, they were doing this kind of inconspicuously. They were taking into consideration the bad reputation they would get if they did this, with other people saying that they sold their estate. At that time, estate sellers were regarded as very bad. There were some people who sold their estates surreptitiously to repay their loans.

Q

For example, if I sold my estate to Tashila because I was short of money and he bought it but he was not an aristocrat, how would it work out?

A

If the estate was small, they would just tell a lie and say that it was being leased. Probably, people never said that they had sold it. So it seemed that it was kind of not allowed to sell estates. However, houses were sold in Lhasa.

Q

For example, the aristocrat Nyelungwa could sell his house in Lhasa, but they were not allowed to sell their estate, right?

A

Yes, probably they were not allowed to sell the estate.

Q

The first question is whether or not estates were allowed to be sold as a right of the aristocrat. The second question is, in case they sold an estate, under what kind of circumstance or conditions were they allowed to sell it?

A

I have never seen people selling and buying estates. It seems that it was kind of not allowed, but I don't have anything to tell you that there were such and such restrictions that it was not allowed to be sold.

Q

I heard that [Trimön](#) [tib. khri smon] sold or offered his estate to Kündeling, and Kündeling paid a kind of salary to him and his new wife until he died, right?

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A

That's right.

Q

I think it was kind of sold, right?

A

Yes, it was kind of sold, but not really sold.

Q

I think that Kündeling kept the estate till they were eliminated [died]?

A

That was not certain. I have a little bit to tell you regarding [Trimön](#). I heard that all of the estates that belonged to [Trimön](#) were offered to Kündeling and in turn Kündeling supplied monthly allotments of [tsamba](#), flour, butter, tea, and all the things for the Ex-Kalön [Trimön](#), his wife, his old steward [tib. mgron gnyer] and several maid-servants. Altogether that included about 10-15 people.

At that time, there were some small shops near [Trimön](#) House. I heard that the Trimön's wife was a very strange woman. As soon as she got the foodstuffs from Kündeling, she used to give a lot of those things to other aristocrats, friends and relatives, so at the end of month, her foodstuffs would run out, right?.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] I am not sure about this, but I have seen the Lady [Trimön](#) wearing a lot of make up.

A

Yes. At that time, when [Trimön](#) and his wife would go shopping, I used to follow them when I was a child. When they got inside the shops, his wife would call her husband Kundün [tib. sku mdun]. We heard from people that she was calling her husband Kundün which was usually what we called the Dalai Lama. So I used to follow them to find out whether she was saying that or not and she indeed said that. At the end of the month,

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Trimön's wife would run out of money and she would send their steward Yabda Palag [tib. [yab](#) mda' pa lags] with her apron and chuba which cost about 100 srang [as pawn] to borrow about 30 srang from the small shops. When she got the money from Kündeling, she repaid the money and also gave them a lot of gifts.

Q

Who took the possession of the estates after [Trimön](#) died?

A

After [Trimön](#) died, Kündeling didn't have the right to take possession completely.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] According to my understanding, didn't all the estates of [Trimön](#) completely belong to Kündeling? What happened to the son of [Trimön](#)? He might have gotten some share since he had the house, right?

A

I don't have anything detailed to tell you about this. However, after the two Kungös died [Trimön and his wife], Kündeling didn't get to take possession of the estate completely. Probably, it was offered to him only for during his lifetime. There were two sons of [Trimön](#). We were schoolmates. One was called Loten [tib. blo bstan] La and the other was called Gyentsen [tib. rgyal mtshan] la. Gyentsen La worked as the manager (chandzö) of a monastery in Nyen [tib. gnyan] and he died first.

Q

For example, Surkhang had many estates. When Surkhang Kalön's younger sister went to Rongdrag [tib. rong brag] as a bride, if Surkhang thought of giving her an estate because they had many estates, did they have the authority to do that?

A

Yes, they did.

Q

Did they have to ask the government?

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A

Probably not because [Shatra](#) [tib. bshad sgra] had done the same thing. The [Shatra](#) family underwent fission. [Shatra](#) Gandan Panjor [tib. dga' ldan dpal 'byor] and [the daughter] Lhayönla separated and filed a lawsuit. I saw the documents in the archives. Lhayönla was the mother of Chapa Södrön la [tib. cha pa bsod sgron]. Probably, Gandan Panjor and Lhayönla were brothers and sisters from the same parents, but they didn't get along well.

They divided the estates at the time of the Reting [tib. rwa sgrenj]. At that time, I was a child, but I knew that the backer of Lhayönla was a trader from Ga [tib. sga] called Tsongpön Dündrül [tib. tshong dpon bdud 'dul] who was a favorite [tib. spyen bsal] of (the Regent) Reting. I used to stay in his house when I was going to the school.

Q

What was that lawsuit for?

A

It was about dividing the estates.

Q

How many estates did they divide to each party?

A

Both of the parties were saying that they wanted more of the estates. Later, they appealed to the local (Tibetan) government and they divided (the estates) almost equally. The names of the estates and the numbers of the [dön](#) were mentioned in the document. Gandan Panjor became the main [Shatra](#) family and he got a little bit more of the estates, and the other party became the [surpa](#) [tib. zur pa], or the secondary branch of the family, and they got a little bit less of the estates.

In the early times, I heard that Shasur [tib. bshad zur] [the Kalön] also used to be from [Shatra](#) and later he also became a secondary branch of [Shatra](#). He was given estates like the Lhadong Shenkha estate [tib. lha gdong shan kha]. Later, Lhayön La also followed this path and became a secondary branch of Shadra. At that time, they reported to the Kashag and the Kashag issued the verdict [tib. dpyad mtshams].

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Q

At that time, some of the [Khampa](#) traders became rich and famous like [Panda](#) [tib. spom mda'] and [Sandu](#) [tib. sa 'du]. Did they have estates?

A

No, they didn't.

Q

I think that they had the money to buy an estate, right?

A

Yes, you ask a good question. If the aristocrats had been allowed to sell their estates, they would have sold them to those people. But they didn't.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] According to what I heard, [Sandu](#) Rinchen became a lay official. The Local Government was saying the aristocracy was inherited and they had to have land (estate). This was the main principle of the feudal system. But [Sandu](#) Rinchen became an aristocrat, so I am not sure what kind of name he took. [Panda](#) Yarphel [tib. spom mda' yar 'phel] also became a Kudrak. Actually, they were just traders.

A

That's right, they were indeed traders.

Q

Did they have estates?

A

Panda Yarphel was given the title of Kudrak as an award [tib. gzigz bzoz] for working as the Tibetan Government's Trader [tib. gzhung tshong]. The government received great profit [from his work]. [Panda](#) also made quite a good accounting [tib. rtsis rgyag] to the government.

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Q

After they became government officials, were their children allowed to become government officials?

A

No, they were not allowed.

Q

Did the sons of [Panda](#) like Jigme [tib. 'jig med] became government officials?

A

Probably not. I didn't hear about that. Jigme was the son of Pomda Topgye [tib. stobs rgyas].

Q

Sandu Rinchen became a real lay official, how did it happen?

A

His wife was something in Reting Labrang.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] She might be related to Reting and probably they had an estate, right? I heard he should have the name of an estate to become a Kudrak.

A

Yes, at least they had to have that. Dzasa Gyatag was also a monk official in the beginning. Later, in order to inherit, he asked for an estate called Gyatag and took its name. He didn't succeed in having a son, otherwise, he was allowed to have his son become a government official. I didn't hear that [Sandu](#) Rinchen had an estate, but he had a very good backer in the Reting Labrang and became a real lay official.

Q

Actually, they had to have an inheritance to become a government official.

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Q

The [Yabshi](#) [tib. [yab](#) gzhis] were always like this.

Q

The [Yabshi](#), the families of the Dalai Lamas, were special and became the first class aristocrats .

A

That was special.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:]According to the Tibetan system, the aristocrats had estates along with the [miser](#) to work on them. The [miser](#) were not allowed to leave [the estate] even if they didn't want to work. But people like you are kind of new. Actually, you [refers to Setrong] belonged to the [miser](#), but you had lands and also people to work on it and they were kind of your [miser](#), so how did that come about? Were you given a special kind of authority? Or could some of the rich [shungyupa](#) households also do that? Tell me about this system.

A

You said something very profound. The local (Tibetan) government had been imposing taxes from the early times and they made some basic land enumeration documents [tib. rtsa 'dzin yig cha] called Shibshung [tib. zhib gzhung] that specified how the taxes would be imposed. But they were unable to make an overall document to be used throughout all of Tibet. They just made some partial documents and imposed taxes. These taxes were imposed too much and [miser](#) (families) became extinct.

In 1830, the Iron-Tiger Year, they made the land enumeration called the "The land Enumeration of the Iron-Tiger Year" [tib. lcags stag zhib gzhung]. The 9th, 10th and the 11th Dalai Lamas didn't live long. The regent between the 9th and 10th Dalai Lama was Tsomönling [tib. tshe smon gling]. The Iron-Tiger year was during that period and the land enumeration was made at that time. For example, at that time, my family was a well-to-do [shungyupa](#) household with one [tregang](#) of land. When the land enumeration of the Iron-Tiger Year was made, there were 5-6 [shungyupa](#) households like Pangpa and Sogdrong

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whose members had died and the family had become extinct [tib. mi [shi](#) khyim stongs]. However, all of them didn't die, so there were a few [miser](#) who became like beggars and were wandering around not knowing where to go. They were unable to plant the fields and there was nobody working for the taxes.

When the land enumeration was made, our family was well-to-do but had only one [tregang](#), so the government just attached the lands of the 4-5-6 extinct [shungyupa](#) households to our family. I remember going to burn incense in those ruined houses during the New Year and they told me that [the lands of] these ruins were attached to us. Like this, they attached the lands to the better household and also imposed the taxes on that household. Since the lands had not been planted for many years, so the land had become kind of white with dust [tib. thal ba skya chags]. They just investigated the previous land enumeration and guessed that there might be this amount [khe](#) of land. That's how we had eight and one third [tregang](#).

Actually at first we had about 13 [tregang](#), but we gave one third to the secondary branch of our family when they got separated from us. At that time, they also gathered the people [the remaining people from the extinct families] and they were also given to us along with the land. In the Land enumeration of the Iron-Tiger Year, it said, "No matter whether you could handle the land or not, you have to pay in-kind or in work for this amount of taxes." All the land enumerations were kept in the archives.

Q

Did they mention in the land enumeration document that you were given the people along with the lands?

A

Yes, it was mentioned that all of the remaining lands and the people were given to us.

Q

Those people belonged to the government, right?

A

Yes.

Q

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[Tashi Tsering said:] Otherwise, if they had belonged to the monasteries or the aristocrats, they wouldn't agree to that. Is it like nowadays when small factories get merged into bigger factories?

A

Yes, it was something like that. At the time of the Iron-Tiger land enumeration, there were households like us who had capable people at home so we got land and [miser](#). So we were able to work for the taxes and we also became a rich and big household. But some of them were unable to manage themselves.

Q

[Tashi Tsering said:] In the past, people used to say, "There was Setrong Yume [tib. gser grong g.yu smad] in the upper part of the valley and there was the Kyarpo Ayar [tib. skyar po a yar] in the lower part of the valley. The two of you were considered to be the two big households in that area. However, did Kyarpo Ayar become rich also from the Iron-Tiger land enumeration?

A

Yes, it was related to that.

Q

Did it happen the same as for you?

A

Probably, but I don't have any details to tell you about that. You can just find out about this in the Iron-Tiger land enumeration document. Kyarpo Ayar was a very big household. Later, they took a bridegroom who was related to [Dombor](#) [tib. gdong por].

I told you there were four types of tax exemptions. The second exemption was the Magchag [tib. dmag chag], the military tax exemption. It was called the Gyajong Magchag [tib. rgya sbyong dmag chag]. The third exemption was called Tongnying Trüchag [tib. stongs rnying bkrus chag].

Q

What does Trüchag mean?

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A

The Local (Tibetan) Government enumerated the land (fields) very thoroughly when they made the Iron-Tiger land enumeration, but there were some places where they were unable to enumerate them because it [the fields] had become extinct [not in use] [tib. stongs] long, long ago. [The people who said the land was extinct] had to take an oath that this was true. They swore it was true by washing a statue and drinking the water used for washing the statue. They were trusted because they drank the water used for washing the statue.

The fourth exemption was the Iron-Hare land enumeration note [tib. lcags yos zhib mchan]. This was a reinvestigation done in the year after the Iron-Tiger Year, [and changes] were made as a note to the Iron-Tiger Enumeration. Not only this, they also made similar notes even after that. These notes indicate corrections for some wrong enumerations that were done in the Iron-Tiger Year. These were the corrections.

Q

Tashi Tsering said:] Regarding the relationship between the [miser](#) and the aristocratic and religious estates, it was not that the [miser](#) didn't have any rights. If the [miser](#) did the taxes, the [lord](#) was not allowed to expel the [miser](#) and the [miser](#) could inherit their lands for their children. At that time, one of the rights of the [lord](#) was that they could take [mibo](#) [tib. mi bogs] or human lease fees from the [miser](#). Those [miser](#) were allowed to go anywhere. There was also a system called mitröl [tib. mi 'khrol], which was a kind of giving permission to a [miser](#) to leave the serf owner. I also heard that there was something called Mije [tib. mi brjes] which involved exchanging [miser](#). Tell me about the authority and rights of both the serf owners and the [miser](#)?

A

As you said, when the [miser](#) who belonged to the government and the aristocratic and religious estates [tib. gzhung sger chos gsum] got married with a [miser](#) who belonged to a different serf owner they could request from their own serf owner to grant them permission to pay the [mibo](#) (human lease) fee to them. If the serf owner agreed to that, they had to pay a yearly [mibo](#) fee and then they were allowed to go wherever they wanted to go.

As for the mitröl, it was mainly for the "religious release" (chödrö) when they needed to make their children monks. Some of the [miser](#) who were related to the serf owners

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requested that the serf owner give permission for the boy to leave the serf owner (to join the monastery). They gave them this permission. This was among the [shungyupa](#). As for the [miser](#) who belonged to the aristocrats and the monasteries, it was a little bit difficult to get that.

At that time, when they gave the [chödrö](#) permission, the aristocratic and monastic estates had their land tenure document [tib. bka' gtan] in which it was written that if the monk would lose his celibacy he will belong [revert back] to the previous serf owner. This was called Kyatsa Rangdag [tib. skya rtsa rang bdag]. The [shungyupa](#) households didn't have such land tenure documents.

Q

Was it also the same for the nuns?

A

Yes.

Q

Didn't the aristocrats give servants or maidservants to each other?

A

Yes.

Q

Were they actually given?

A

Yes.

Q

How did they give them?

A

Phala had an estate in Kunbumthang [tib. sku 'bum thang] called Drebu Yulkha [tib. 'bras bu g.yul kha]. The work overseer [tib. las dpon] of that estate was a bearded man who had

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a son called Tsedor [tib. tshe rdor] who acted the part of King Songtsen Gambo [in the opera]. Phala Drönyerchemmo gave Tsedor to [Tseja](#) Gyentsen la [tib. rgyal mtshan lags] as his servant.

There were a lot of such things.

Q

Tell me about this authority.

A

Actually, we never gave our [miser](#) to anyone. If we did give one of our [miser](#) to someone, we would still have to work for the taxes, so the local (Tibetan) government would not inquire about that.

Q

You had the full authority to give your [miser](#), right?

A

Yes, because we did the taxes. There is no question about aristocrats having had that authority. There were also some [miser](#) who were given as repayment for a loan. There was a [shungyupa](#) household called Bogchung living below the hot spring of Tülung. They had a maid servant. Probably, she was paying some kind of human lease [mibo](#) [to her original lord]. She also used to work for us sometimes. At that time, the [shungyupa](#) called Bogchung told their maidservant, "We owe 40 [khe](#) of barley to Namgyal Tratsang [tib. rnam rgyal grwa tshang] so you should go ahead [and become their servant as repayment of this 40 [khe](#) debt]." So I told her that I will pay the loan to the Namgyal Tratsang and the maid-servant and daughter would then belong to me as my [trenyog](#) [tib. bran g.yog] [permanent servant].

Q

What was the origin of the people who were given? They were not [treba](#), right?

A

They were originally [nangsen](#) [household servants].

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Q

Tell me about the [category] [nangsen](#) in detail? They didn't have land, right?

A

No, they didn't have land.

Q

How did they become a [nangsen](#)?

A

When the parents of a household died and there were just some orphans left, we didn't have any choice but to raise them because they belonged to us. So they became our [nangsen](#).

Sometimes, if some of the brothers in a family didn't get along well, some of the brothers told us that they couldn't get along well in their family so they wanted to become our [nangsen](#). Our family also had this kind of [nangsen](#).

Also, sometimes there were just wanderers or people who had run away from other places. They lived in our area as a [dujung](#) for a while and if they were unable to manage their livelihood like that, they would request some household to keep them as servants [tib. g.yog po]. They became [nangsen](#).

Q

Actually, [nangsen](#) and servants were the same, right?

A

Yes. But during the reforms, they made some new rules and said that the [nangsen](#) were the worst category of serf-servant (tib. [trenyog](#)) because they didn't have freedom over their own bodies and they didn't have enough food to eat. It is possible that some of the masters didn't give them enough food, but we were paying 18 [khe](#) of barley per year to the [nangsen](#). It is impossible that this amount of [tsamba](#) would not be enough to live on. They even had some surplus that they used to sell and buy some clothing. We also gave them a set of clothes per year.

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Q

According to my understanding, there was one difference between the [nangsen](#) and the servant. You can hire a servant and give him salary. But were the [nangsen](#) like [trenyog](#) in the sense that the children of [nangsen](#) also become [nangsen](#) from generation to generation?

A

It is possible that some of the children of the [nangsen](#) also became [nangsen](#), but there wasn't any rule that their children had to become a [nangsen](#). When they got married and had children, they were allowed to leave and settle as [düjung](#) and live separately.

Q

Were you allowed to say that [nangsen](#) are not allowed to settle as [düjung](#)?

A

It was inconvenient for the master to have them stay in the household with the children because if both of the parents had to go out to work, who will take care of the children? Therefore, it is better for the masters to let them settle in their own household. Another thing was that the salary was paid only for the parents. So how could they manage the grain for their children? In our household, we used to pay 3-4 [khe](#) of barley for the children, but, there could be some households who didn't pay that.

Q

I think there were difference between the [trenyog](#) and the servants because the people working only during the autumn could get some wages and they could leave after that according to their own wish. So what was the difference between the [trenyog](#) and servants [tib. g.yog po]?

A

This was no difference between the [trenyog](#) and the servants. The difference was between hired persons [tib. gla pa] and [trenyog](#). People working for the spring and autumn seasons came from outside and requested to work during the autumn. We had to pay them 3-4 [khe](#) of barley. Those were just hired hands. It was like the saying, "The servant's

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bedding is above the stairs and the bagthub soup is in the pot" [tib. g.yog po'i nyal chas skas 'dzegs 'go la yod/ thug pa [bag](#) thug khog ma'i nang la yod]. This means they were hired people who go back at the time of the Ngamchö holiday [tib. Inga mchod], the Death Anniversary of the [Tsongkapa](#) on the 25th of 10th Tibetan month. At this time people used to eat [bagthug](#) soup. At that time, they were paid their wages and sent back as they were only hired people. The [trenyog](#), however, belonged to us so we didn't need to pay any wages to them.

Q

Trenyog were one's own [miser](#), right?

A

Yes. They became our [miser](#) because we performed the taxes imposed by the local (Tibetan) government. Therefore, they belonged to us. Lhalu [tib. lha klu] offered a young man called Kelsang [tib. skal bzang] who had good skills as a tailor to the [Kalön](#) Lama Tempa Jamyang [tib. bka' blon bla ma bstan pa 'jam dbyangs].

Q

Was he a [nangsen](#) or was he paying human lease [mibo](#)?

A

I am not sure about that. But anyway, he belonged to Lhalu and Lhalu taught him tailoring and they had kept him as their [trenyog](#). They thought they should offer a useful person, so So they offered him. He was 22-23, about my age, at that time.

Shatra Gandan Paljor also offered a good cook to the [Kalön](#) Lama. He was nicknamed, "Fat cook" but his real name was Lodrö [tib. blo gros]. He is still alive. He was the cook of Tülung [tib. stod lung] County after the reforma. The [Kalön](#) Lama being a monk, didn't have many [miser](#) to summlon to be his servants.

Q

At that time, when you got a loan repaid by giving a [miser](#), did you sign a kind of document with the previous serf owner?

A

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Yes. That was was called tröndzin [tib. 'khrol 'dzin]. It was written that they gave me the [miser](#).

Q

What wording did they write in the tröndzin?

A

For example, it was written like this: "From now on we have offered Shatra's [miser](#) Lodrö to Tempa Jamyang. Therefore, I am issuing a tröndzin on this month and date" [tib. da nas bzung bshad sgra'i mi ser blo gros bstan pa 'jam dbyangs la phul ba'i 'khrol 'dzin du/ zla tshes la].

Q

Would they hand this to the [miser](#) or you?

A

Normally, they would hand it over to the person to whom the [miser](#) was given. For example, I would take the person to Tempa Jamyang and at the same time hand over the tröndzin to him.

Q

Would the miser's children also belong to the person to whom they were given?

A

Yes. In case the person who gave away the [miser](#) [later would] says that their children belonged to him, the person to whom the [miser](#) was given will show the tröndzin. So they won't have anything to say and they also couldn't file a lawsuit.

Q

Did you also get a tröndzin for the [miser](#) you got when you paid the 40 [khe](#) of the loan?

A

I didn't take a tröndzin for that. We just verbally agreed to that. I paid the loan and the serf owner said that you can take the possession of that woman.

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Q

Did her daughter also become your [miser](#)?

A

Yes, she did. And her daughter would also belong to me.

Q

Did you have the custom where you could give one of the sons of your own [miser](#) to somebody else? Did you have the authority to do that?

A

It was not so convenient to do that because if the parents didn't agree to that, we couldn't force them and say that we are going to give your son to somebody else.

Q

Were you allowed to do that?

A

It was kind of allowed, but since he was a human being, if you gave him to somebody and if he ran away it would be very bad.

Q

There were many people who ran away, right?

A

Yes. There was the Agriculture Office (tib. Sonam Lekhung [tib. so nam las khungs]) in the Tibetan Government and some people said that it was similar to the present Agriculture and Husbandry Bureau [ch. nong [mu](#) ju]. But actually it was not similar at all. It was also called Misö Lekhung [tib. mi so'i las khungs] which was the one in charge of the [miser](#) and agriculture, but actually, they took the possession of the fields that were left unplanted although they could be planted [i.e., that were still fertile land].

They also took the possession of the people who came from Kham and [Tsang](#) who didn't have a particular serf owner [tib. dpon po] or the serf owner didn't inquire about them.

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At that time, if a person came from [Tsang](#) to Ü [tib. dbus], they [the serf owner] wouldn't be able to inquire about them. When [the runaway] they were asked, "Who is your serf owner?" They will say, "I don't have a serf owner." This was because they had ran away from somewhere, so it was not convenient for them to tell who their serf owner was. They were afraid of in inquiry being made and being caught. So, they would always tell a lie and say that they were from some other place. The Agriculture Office took the possession of the people who didn't have a serf owner. They were not in charge of the Tibet's Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.

Q

There were a lot of people who were said to have surrendered to the Dzöbug [tib. mdzod sbug] Treasury (which was the Inner Treasury of the Dalai Lama). Were those people who had previously belonged to aristocrats, monasteries and also to the government?

A

It seemed kind of convenient to surrender [to them], because the Dzöbug was the direct treasury of the Dalai Lama and nobody could do anything against that. But that office would not accept the surrender. One had to have a certain reason for surrendering [to them]. So there were just a few people who got accepted. If the [miser](#) had a certain serf owner and the serf owner would come and tell their certain reasons from their side, the person who accepted the surrender would have problem and it would become illegal.

Q

In the old society, did they use the term [trenyog](#)? Or was it a new term in the era of the revolution?

A

This was an old term. It was called yogpo (servant).

Q

Wasn't [trenyog](#) a new term that became popular in the revolution era?

A

No, it wasn't. I saw the term [trenyog](#) used in very old documents.

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Q

If the term [trenyog](#) was an old word, in the old society, did they call [trenyog](#) for the [treba](#)? For example, there were the [treba](#), the [düjung](#), and the [nangsen](#), so was this term [trenyog](#) used for all of these people?

A

This is a question asked by a person who knows about those things. Each of them had their name. For example, they will say, "I am a [treba](#). I am not a [trenyog](#)."

Q

What about [düjung](#)?

A

They would also say, "I am not their [trenyog](#), because I am just working for them as a [düjung](#) and I am a hired person get wages for the work."

Q

If this is the case, the [nangsen](#) like the servants, the maidservants, and the babysitters of the aristocrats were also [trenyog](#), right?

A

The [nangsen](#) were indeed the [trenyog](#). If you say [miser](#), they were also [trenyog](#).

Q

But they were a different kind of [trenyog](#), right?

A

Yes.

Q

So [trenyog](#) goes for everybody in general, but in reality, when you talk about people, they only use it for the [nangsen](#), right?

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A

Yes.

Q

Actually, there was the term [trenyog](#) in the old society, but it was not as widely used as it was in the new society, right?

A

Yes. At that time [in the old society], they call them yogpo.

Q

What was the difference between the [nangsen](#) and the yogpo and yogmo? Did they call the servants and maid servants of the aristocrats [nangsen](#)?

A

In general, they were [nangsen](#).

Q

[Tashi Tsering said] The servants who worked in the aristocratic households were not called [nangsen](#). They were called Simpönla [tib. gzim dpon lags], or personal servants. But actually, they were [nangsen](#), right?

A

Yes. When many people gathered together they will say, "I am the shabchi [tib. zhabs phyi] (personal servant) of Surkhang. I am not a [trenyog](#) of somebody else." They were regarded as a little bit higher.

Q

So according to the new [post-reform] system, they were considered high ranking servants [ch. ago hi bong ren], right?

A

Yes.

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Q

Kujar Phüntsula [tib. sku bcar phun tshogs lags] said that he was the servant of Kujar Künphella. Actually, he was half a servant and half a family member. So this new government called him a high ranking servant.

A

For example, the [miser](#) had to show great respect and take off their hats when they see the [chandzö](#) [servant who worked as the manager for the lord], but when they meet the Kungö [the lord] they were also one of the [nangsen](#) [had to act like his servant].

Q

So you probably could say that all those family servants were a kind of [nangsen](#), but there were higher and lower ones, right?

A

Yes.

Q

There seemed to be three general types or levels [tib. rim pa] of [miser](#), maybe there were more. One was the [treba](#) and the next was the kind of [düjung](#), under that it was the [nangsen](#), Were there any other types?

Q

A

That's right.

Q

What were the levels?

A

If we call it levels, it was kind of complicated because there weren't any fixed levels. But yes there were three types.

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Q

What was the highest type? Was it the [treba](#)?

A

It was something like that. The [treba](#) would say, "I am a permanent [treba](#). I am not a person who ran away from another places and was kind of a [düjung](#)." They were saying that even if they were in a very difficult [economic] conditions and they couldn't go to other places. There wasn't any difference of high and low level.

In general, the system of the religious and political combined political system had become a very special one.

Q

In terms of taxes, did the estates that belonged to the aristocrats and religious entities have the same kind of taxes?

A

They were kind of the same. As I mentioned before, the aristocrats had the tax unit for land called [dön](#) while the [shungyupa](#) had the [gang](#). The [miser](#) on the religious estates were also given an appropriate amount of lands and were then required to perform accordingly the corvée work for the taxes. The taxes were divided between each household, so each of them had to work on a small portion of the taxes. The [miser](#) who belonged to the monasteries had a very hard time.

In general, under the system of religious and politics combined, the religious estates were regarded very highly. At that time in the old society, there were 7 high status institutions [tib. che btsan bdun]: Sera, Drepung and Gandan, Gyüdra Tömey nyi [tib. rgyud grwa stod smad gnyis], Namgyal Tratsang [tib. rnam rgyal grwa tshang] and [Nechung](#) [tib. gnas chung]. Almost all of the small monasteries in Tibet were belonged to these 7 monastic institutions.

Q

Did the estates that belonged to the aristocrats and religious entities have to do the [chitre](#)?

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A

Yes, they had to. If they had two [gang](#), they had to work for the [chitre](#) for only one [gang](#). They had to work half of the taxes for it. The aristocrats and monasteries had the [dön](#) tax unit and we, the shungyupas, had the [gang](#).

Q

Were the taxes for the don and the [gang](#) the same?

A

When the 13th Dalai Lama recruited the soldiers for the Gyena [tib. brgyad sna] Regiment, it was said that [dön](#) and [gang](#) were equal [tib. rkang 'don 'dra mnyam]. The aristocrats had to provide one soldier for 4 [dön](#) and the [shungyupa](#) had to send one soldier for 8 [gang](#). So it became the same. Otherwise, the [gerpa](#) and monasteries had to work only half of the taxes.

The aristocrats also had more exemptions. In the old society when the renovation of the [Jokhang](#) took place and they newly built the Surchong [tib. zur 'phyong] (the corner room of the house with windows on both sides on the courtyard) [tib. 'khyam ra] and also the rooms of the Dalai Lama, they imposed a tax on tamarisk which was used for the red top of those rooms [tib. spen bad]. It was written in the edict for imposing the tax, that "Half the amount of tamarisk taxes would be exempted for the 4 types of tax exemptions and the 7 high status institutes." Except for those, all the [shungyupa](#) households had to deliver 200 loads of tamarisk that were lengthwise 3 tretse [ch. chi zi] [one tretsi = 1/3 meter] before some fixed date. This will be used for the room of the Dalai Lama and it is very important.

At that time, we reported that we don't have any tamarisk in the area, so we didn't need to deliver that. This was kind of a new tax imposed all of a sudden.

Q

How did the nomads [pay taxes]?

A

They had a calculation called gotsi [tib. mgo rtsis] (head count). They used to count the animals once every 3 years and 20 animals were counted as 1 go [tib. mgo] unit.

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Q

Was this the system for the nomads in your place?

A

This was the system in the north.

Q

The Labrang [tib. bla brang] and the Tratsangs (Monastic Colleges) used the system called Kyeme Chime [tib. skye med 'chi med]. It was a tradition of leasing animals where the return payment of butter was fixed regardless of the increase or the decrease in the amount of the leased animals. This was a different kind, right?

A

The Kyeme Chime was not regarded as a tax, though it was a kind of tax. They just fixed 2 [khe](#) of butter for each female yak per year regardless of whether the female yak would give birth to a calf or if they would die.

From the early times, the [Laja](#) had leased 20 female yaks to some well-to-do families like us. This was for the butter to be used for the Mönlam [tib. smon lam] Prayer Festival. So we had to deliver 40 [khe](#) of butter every year [regardless of whether there were many more female yaks now or if all had died].

Q

This was not a kind of tax. It was a kind of loaning the use of the animals and collecting the interest every year, right?

A

No. That was called the Shey [tib. she] or the animal husbandry lease. I could also lease my female yaks to other nomads. If both sides agreed to that, we would agree to lease them according to the system of Kyeyö Chiyö [tib. skye yod 'chi yod]. In this system, the butter was paid according to the increases and decreases of the animals. Usually, Kyeme Chime was done by the government.

When we leased yaks in that way, in summer we would go to see how many calves were born. Supposing 5 female yaks gave birth to calves, then we would collect 2 and half [khe](#)

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of butter per year as the lease [from each yak] and we would give 2 [khe](#) of butter for the female yaks that gave birth in the previous year. If they didn't give birth, they didn't need to pay anything. We would seal the horn of the newborns and count how many four year old [tib. so gnyis] calves and how many six year old calves there were [tib. so bzhi], and how many yak babies [tib. ya ru] there were. When the animals died, they would have to show the seal on the horn.

Q

Were there any other Gotsi other than the system of the Kyeme Chime? In the nomad areas in [Tö](#), there was a system of [markhe](#) where 13 yak were counted as one [markhe](#) and they had to pay butter and skins and that stuff based on that. They were taxpayer [miser](#) and they were not allowed to go to other places, and they [their lord] had the authority to find and return people who ran away. This was called Mitsa Yonggug [tib. mi rtsa yong 'gugs].

A

Yes, the local (Tibetan) government had given a land tenure document for the Mitsa Yonggug allowing them to retrieve people.

Q

Was that given to the aristocratic and religious estates?

A

Yes.

Q

But in the nomad area where I did my research, they didn't have the Kyeme Chime. Their serf owner [tib. dpon] was [Tashilhunpo](#) Labrang and they did the gotsi census like the farmers and they collected the Leb [tib. leb] once every three years. This was kind of paying the tax.

A

Yes, I saw in the old documents mention of the Lebtsi [tib. leb rtsis] and in that the number of people were also counted. There were strange things. Generally, in the Nagchu

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area, gotsi was done once every 3 years to check the animals and to checking the newborn and death total of the animals. At that time, 20 yaks were counted as one [gang](#).

Q

What I am not clear is, for example, that some of the nomads belonged to [Gomang](#) [tib. sgo mang] Tratsang so they would do the Gotsi once every 3 years and the nomads have to pay the taxes like butter and skin to the [Gomang](#). In addition to that, were there any system where they also had to pay the lease to another owner like, for example. the [Sera Je](#) [tib. byes] because they Sera Je] had left say about 100 females yaks in the early times as the Kyeme Chime?

A

This was not a matter of whether there was such a custom or not. This depended on whether the nomads got somebody to lease them the animals.

Q

It was like investing, right?

A

Yes. So they won't lease the animals like this, because they won't get the lease back.

Q

I heard that sometimes it had happened 100-200 years ago. I had done some research on the Drepung Monastery and most of the research were done on the farmers. I knew something about the nomads though it was not so clear. I was not sure whether in the early times, somebody had invested animals and they were collecting the lease every year or whether it was a form of taxes that they have to pay in addition to the Kyeme Chime to their own serf owner? I don't know whether the nomads were real [miser](#). This is what I am asking?

A

In the past, some of them were given the real female yaks and some of them were just given just a little bit money for that.

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Q

Was that for buying the female yaks?

A

Yes. Yes, for example, for buying 20 female yaks they paid 50 [sang](#) for each female yak and made an agreement to pay 2 [khe](#) of butter from each animal per year. This was done because the nomads had a good herd of animals and quite a good number of workers. This was not called a tax. It was called the She, the lease agreement for the Kyeme Chime.

Q

Were there any other taxes imposed on the nomads in Nagchu area?

A

At that time, probably for the nomads in Nagchu and [Tö](#) it must be the same. When they did the lebsi and gotsi, it was counted as one [tregang](#) for each 20 animals that belonged to the nomads themselves.

Q

They had to pay the tax for this to the government, right?

A

Yes. For this they had to pay taxes to the government. Otherwise they didn't need to pay taxes and they would say that [Gomang](#) has leased the animals using the Kyeme Chime system so we have to pay 40 [khe](#) of butter.

Q

In the [Tö](#) area, I heard that even single people who didn't have animals still had to pay the money or butter to Labrang because of a head tax called Gotram [tib. mgo tram].

A

That was the Lebsi which was done on the people, They imposed some money taxes on the people who didn't have to pay the taxes.

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Q

In the places where I did the research, they divided the pastures into units like counting the [khe](#) of seed in farm areas, but there they called it Markhe. Once every three years they would do the Lebtsi and count the animals and if my animals had increased I could get 2-3 [additional] Markhe of pastures. If the animals decreased, I will lose some pastures. This was the custom of the [Panchen Lama's] Labrang.

A

That is correct.